
Lived Experiences of School Leaders in Promoting Effective Teaching and Learning in Basic Education

Dr. Dennis C. Tullao
Pangasinan State University OUS
ORCID
tullaodennis13@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the experiences of school leaders working to improve teaching and learning in basic education. It aimed to understand how school leaders describe their work, the challenges they face, and how they support teachers' improvement. The study used a research approach focused on understanding school leaders' thoughts and experiences. The study selected school leaders because they had experience leading schools and working with teachers. The researcher collected information through interviews, where school leaders could share their stories and thoughts. The researcher asked questions to learn even more. The researcher analyzed the information to identify ideas and patterns in what school leaders said. The results showed that school leaders believe improving teaching and learning requires effort. This includes leading teaching, helping teachers work together, adapting, managing resources, and making the school a good place to be. School leaders faced problems such as limited funding, low teacher motivation, resistance to change, diverse student needs, heavy workloads, communication issues, new technology and curriculum demands, and insufficient support from others. To address these problems, school leaders used strategies such as supporting teacher growth, providing training, observing classes, giving feedback, collaborating, securing more resources, using technology, and making data-driven decisions. The study shows that being a good school leader means more than managing things. It means being a guide, a teacher, a helper, a motivator, and a partner in making education. The study suggests that school leaders should focus more on teaching leadership, working with others, involving school leaders, and continuously learning and improving to strengthen teaching and support student learning in basic education.

Keywords: School leadership, effective teaching and learning, lived experiences, basic education, administrative workload

INTRODUCTION

Effective education is necessary to achieve quality education. Therefore, schools must do more than provide learners with education. They are also expected to create an environment conducive to learning and to the development of teachers and schools as a whole. In the educational environment, school leaders play an important role. Their leadership defines the direction of school operations, its culture, and its success. It also influences how teachers carry out their teaching responsibilities and how schools apply instructional methods.

School leaders create the conditions teachers need to do their work. They are expected to perform a variety of tasks, including leadership functions such as overseeing and mentoring

teachers. They guide teachers' professional development, ensure school facilities are used properly, and make the right decisions. School leaders can provide teachers with feedback based on classroom observations; however, this practice is not easy because of many challenges.

To promote education, a school administrator must be ready to respond to evolving environmental demands and the needs of stakeholders at all levels. Students are the subjects of learning processes, but their learning styles vary significantly. Technology develops extremely rapidly; thus, the skills of students who learn through it also grow. However, curriculum revisions influence the academic content of education and create problems with materials, which are often insufficient. Educational policies change dramatically and alter the spirit of current education. All these influence the educational processes. Thus, managers should be flexible to meet these challenges. The key skills of a successful manager should include communication, problem-solving, and pedagogical skills.

Although many believe school leadership is mainly about achieving visible operational outcomes, most discussions of school managers' activities focus on their accomplishments. Their tangible results are undeniable and deserve serious attention. Nevertheless, their achievements do not address the full range of problems managers face in managing the educational process.

This study of school leaders' experiences provides valuable insights into instructional leadership in the context of basic education. School leaders' stories help reveal how they lead, what their jobs entail, and the challenges they encounter. The stories may also reveal school leaders' values, relationships with others, decisions, and external aspects of their leadership. The insights gained through research can help create effective school leadership practices that meet the real needs of teachers and students.

This study aims to explore school leaders' experiences in improving teaching and learning outcomes. The study focuses on the nature of communication school leaders use to describe their experience, the means they apply to contribute to teaching and learning processes, and the obstacles they may face during the research.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored school leaders' experiences as they fulfill their roles in improving instructional practices and learning outcomes.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do school leaders describe their lived experiences in promoting effective teaching and learning in basic education?
2. What challenges do school leaders encounter in promoting effective teaching and learning, and how do they address these challenges?
3. What strategies and practices do school leaders employ to support teachers and enhance the teaching and learning process?

Scope and Delimitations

This research examined how education school leaders fulfill and perceive their roles in promoting quality teaching and learning. It aimed to gain insight into their descriptions of what they do, how they do it, their methodologies, and their challenges. The research was not related to their support for teachers' improvement of classroom praxis and the creation of the necessary environment for teaching and learning. The participants were the school leaders with hands-on

experience in organizing and implementing educational activities at school. To gather relevant knowledge, the researchers used qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews, to collect stories and accounts from the leaders under study.

This study was limited to the ideas and experiences of these selected school leaders. The research did not include the voices of educators, students, parents, or other educational stakeholders. The researchers relied on the schools and educational contexts involved in the research. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to all school leaders or all basic education institutions. The research primarily focused on leadership behavior and only indirectly connected it to other aspects of school management, such as financial management, infrastructure issues, staff management, and other functions of school administration.

Review of Related Literature

School Leadership and Student Outcomes

Research has shown a clear correlation between effective school leadership and teaching and learning outcomes. According to Day et al. (2016), the study examined how school leadership enhances student outcomes by showing how successful headmasters and headmistresses improve students' learning. The findings showed that several factors, such as instructional leadership, transformational leadership, teacher motivation, and professional development, play an important role. This study is relevant to our research because it shows that school leadership affects student learning indirectly by creating conditions for effective teaching.

Dutta et al. (2016) examined the effect of school leadership on student learning by analyzing the role of school climate and teachers' satisfaction in this relationship. They found that transformational leaders can indirectly enhance students' academic performance. By fostering better school climate or improving teachers' working conditions, they create a conducive environment for high-quality teaching and learning. This study is useful for our research because it illustrates how school leadership can create conditions that promote change at school.

Transformational School Leadership and Teachers' Professional Experiences

According to Thomas et al. (2020), school leadership is linked to teachers' perceptions of their work during their first year of teaching. The researchers found that leadership support for teachers and their confidence in their professional abilities are key factors in shaping teachers' motivation to engage in their work. The findings show the importance of school leadership in creating an environment that helps teachers develop professionally and build relationships with each other.

Rodrigues and Lima (2024) examined leadership in the context of school leaders' positions. Their mixed-methods research showed that many school principals spend most of their efforts on management duties, with little attention to instructional work. The subjects also said that some forms of instructional leadership have a weak impact on student outcomes. This research is important to the study because it shows the challenges school principals face in carrying out both administrative and instructional duties.

Instructional Leadership and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Liu et al. (2022) investigated shared instructional leadership and its relationship with teacher self-efficacy and student academic performance in China. The findings indicated that principal

instructional leadership was significantly associated with teacher instructional leadership, while both forms of leadership were positively related to teacher self-efficacy and student performance. This suggests that effective school leaders do not simply direct teachers but can empower them to participate actively in instructional leadership. The study is relevant to the present research because it provides a foundation for exploring how school leaders experience teacher empowerment, collaboration, and shared responsibility for teaching and learning.

Building School Leaders' Instructional Leadership Capacity

Pashmforoosh et al. (2023) examined whether virtual professional leadership learning communities could improve school leaders' instructional leadership capacity. Results revealed how structured learning, teamwork, reflection, and leadership growth provided school leaders with better methods. The findings show that school leaders need to continue learning and receive support to direct their teachers effectively and improve their instructional methods. This is important for the study because learning about school leaders' real-life experiences will clarify the problems, support networks, and learning experiences they have.

He et al. (2024) examined the effectiveness of school principals' instructional leadership as an indicator of teachers' professional development. The study shows how instructional leadership by school principals helps teachers progress. The results show that effective instruction is dependent not only on teachers' knowledge but also on the actions of school leaders. This is important for the research because professional development, coaching, feedback, and instructional support may emerge as major elements of school leaders' experience.

Thien and Liu (2024) looked at the link between leadership, teacher confidence, and teacher learning. The study shows that instructional leadership connects to teacher learning and that teacher confidence plays a part in that link. The research stresses that school leaders must spot teachers' learning needs and make opportunities for lasting learning. For the qualitative study, this provides a solid starting point for exploring how school leaders feel about their duty to develop teachers and improve classroom instruction.

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in Instructional Leadership Theory, which Hallinger and Murphy first proposed in 1985 and Hallinger later developed in 2003. According to Instructional Leadership Theory, school leaders play a crucial role in improving learning through clearly defined, purposeful leadership actions. Hallinger and Murphy's theory comprises three components: formulating the school mission, managing the instructional process, and establishing a suitable learning environment. Each component requires defining school objectives, explaining them to all teachers, monitoring and assessing the educational process, managing the curriculum, monitoring student performance, and helping teachers improve their professional skills by establishing an enabling environment for teaching and learning. Therefore, Instructional Leadership Theory became the basis for analyzing how school leaders implement their duties and how these contributions support effective teaching and learning at the elementary level.

This study also drew on ***Transformational Leadership Theory***, first introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and later expanded by Bernard M. Bass in 1985. Transformational Leadership Theory showed how leaders could inspire and push teachers toward goals, welcome better ways, and help change the organization. In schools, Transformational Leadership Theory is linked to actions like providing support, encouraging critical thinking, providing motivational energy, and building a shared vision. Hallinger (2003)

said that both Instructional and Transformational Leadership are ways of leading schools, and that how well they work can depend on the particular school and new educational demands. Because of this, Transformational Leadership Theory helped shape school leaders' stories as they inspired teachers, supported teacher growth, built teamwork, and ran projects aimed at strengthening teaching and learning.

Conceptual Framework

The study's **Input** started with the development of three research questions. These questions directed the research toward the lives of educational administrators in understanding teaching and learning in basic education. The study focused on the experiences of school educational administrators. It investigated the obstacles they faced and how they coped with them. Moreover, the input included strategies school managers used to support both teachers and the process itself. These three research questions formed the basis for understanding how participants responded to the user research.

The study's **Process** implied that the data were collected and analyzed from school representatives. The data were collected via in-depth interviews. The interviews were sufficient to allow respondents to share their stories about their experiences and the difficulties they had to overcome. First, the audio-recorded interviews were prepared for analysis. After transcription, the raw data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Native readers identified the emotions connected to the information obtained, updated some codes, and developed themes.

The **research output included themes and thorough explanations of school administrators' experiences**. The results revealed the difficulties school administrators encountered. It also illustrated how they responded to these difficulties. The research highlighted the methods and approaches they used to support teachers and enhance teaching and learning. In light of the results, the research provided observations that can be implemented to create or strengthen leadership programs and initiatives. The aim was to enhance teaching and learning in education through effective leadership.

In general, the IPO (Input-Process-Output) conceptual model organized the study. It illustrated how the study questions were transformed into outcomes through qualitative methods. The model indicated how the experience, challenges, and leadership style were studied through data collection and analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a qualitative approach to examine school leaders' experiences in improving education and schooling in general. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed the collection of detailed information about participants' experiences, how they tackled the issues, and the strategies they applied in their work. The study examined participants' thoughts and feelings about their actual school environment.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The researchers focused on the school leaders who worked with teachers, ran teaching programs, and applied the strategies to improve schooling. Participant selection was based on criteria that ensured they had the necessary knowledge and skills to participate in the research process. This helped the

researchers collect valuable information from experienced school leaders familiar with the research topic.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews that varied slightly from one interview to another. Interview questions were included in an interview guide that allowed participants to speak more openly. This ensured that all interviews were conducted similarly while allowing researchers to ask additional questions if an important issue emerged. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to preserve meaning. Researchers took steps to protect the participants and keep their information confidential.

Data analysis used thematic analysis. Researchers reviewed the transcripts to identify important elements and recurring ideas, which were coded. The researchers then grouped codes into categories to build higher-level themes. The emphasis was on refining the themes to ensure they reflected participants' feelings and experiences while remaining aligned with the teaching-learning processes being facilitated. Finally, the themes were checked for relevance to the study questions. This step helped reveal ideas and patterns related to school leaders' experiences, their working methods, and the problems that need to be addressed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. How do school leaders describe their lived experiences in promoting effective teaching and learning in basic education?

The school leaders reflect on their journeys of ensuring effective teaching and crafting incredible learning experiences for students. This process requires involvement across multiple aspects of the work. It requires collaboration among education leaders and school leaders willing to adapt to the consequences of ongoing transformations and empathize with teachers and students. They understand their role not just as school administrators but also as facilitators of quality training. Their experience focuses on creating an environment where teachers strive to improve their teaching and children have opportunities to develop academically and personally.

The stakeholders mention that one of their crucial actions is assisting teachers with their teaching issues. School leaders commonly observe lessons, provide feedback, and encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching methods. They believe teaching quality can always improve with various forms of educational support.

Educational system leaders share their thoughts on the problems and needs emerging within schools. They are concerned about differences in how students learn, learning gaps, behavior problems, insufficient resources, and changing school requirements. These events call for decisions, adjustments to educational programs, and new approaches to teaching courses. From their experience, it is clear that effective education is not static; it requires constant adjustments.

The next important part of their experience is cooperation with students, teachers, parents, and other concerned groups. School leaders recognize that improving education is not the concern of school leaders and teachers alone. In addition, they promote teamwork, open discussions, sharing successful ideas, and joint decision-making. School leaders also build relationships with parents and other local community representatives to provide students with the support they need.

School leaders talk not only about managing resources and ensuring quality education, but also about books, technology, buildings, finances, and teachers' workload. To face these challenges, they must use the resources they have and develop new ideas to solve problems by working with others. Their experience has shown them that imagination is necessary to solve problems and identify what matters most: meeting teachers' needs and ensuring students receive a quality education.

School authorities emphasize the value of creating a positive school culture. They share their experiences of motivating teachers, recognizing their professionalism, and ensuring mutual respect among everyone. School authorities understand that teachers do much better work when they know they matter and are part of the decision-making process. Thus, they want to create a work environment built on trust, cooperation, and a willingness to improve.

Overall, school leaders' experiences show that making teaching and learning work well is hard but meaningful. Their experiences include leading teaching, helping teachers work with others to solve problems, handling resources, and creating a learning environment. Despite the challenges, school leaders show strength and a commitment to improving schools. Their experiences show that good school leadership is more than managing; it is about helping teachers meet student needs, bringing school leaders together, and always looking for ways to improve school learning.

SOP 2. What challenges do school leaders encounter in promoting effective teaching and learning, and how do they address these challenges?

- Limited resources and instructional materials – School leaders experience shortages in learning materials, technology, facilities, and financial resources. They address these through resource mobilization, prioritizing needs, and partnerships with stakeholders and community organizations.
- Teacher-related challenges – Differences in teachers' skills, motivation, workload, and commitment can affect the quality of instruction. School leaders respond through mentoring, coaching, professional development, classroom observations, and constructive feedback.
- Resistance to change – Some teachers may be hesitant to adopt new teaching strategies, technologies, or school programs. Leaders address this by communicating the purpose and benefits of change, involving teachers in decision-making, and providing continuous support and guidance.
- Diverse learning needs of students – Differences in students' abilities, backgrounds, learning styles, and levels of engagement create challenges in ensuring that all learners receive effective instruction. School leaders promote inclusive practices, differentiated instruction, intervention programs, and learner-centered approaches.
- Heavy administrative workload – Numerous administrative responsibilities may limit the time school leaders can devote to instructional supervision. They manage this by delegating responsibilities, strengthening teamwork, and establishing efficient operational systems.
- Communication and coordination difficulties – Miscommunication among school leaders, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders can hinder the implementation of

educational programs. Leaders address this through regular meetings, open communication channels, consultations, and collaborative decision-making.

- Challenges in maintaining teacher motivation – Work pressure, limited recognition, and demanding responsibilities may affect teachers' morale. School leaders address this through recognition, encouragement, supportive leadership, and opportunities for professional growth.
- Adapting to educational changes and technology – Changes in curriculum, policies, and digital technologies require school leaders and teachers to continuously adapt. They respond through training, capacity-building activities, technology integration, and ongoing implementation monitoring.
- Parental and community involvement – Limited participation of parents and community members can affect learners' academic development. School leaders address this by strengthening school-community partnerships, conducting parent engagement activities, and encouraging stakeholder participation.
- Maintaining quality and accountability – Ensuring consistent teaching quality while meeting curriculum standards and institutional expectations is challenging. School leaders address this through instructional monitoring, data-informed decision-making, performance evaluation, and continuous improvement initiatives.

SOP 3. What strategies and practices do school leaders employ to support teachers and enhance the teaching and learning process?

The strategies and techniques used by educational leaders focus on guiding educators, supporting professional development, and enabling collaboration. Educational leaders can monitor the teaching process by observing teachers' work in their classrooms. To see what teachers do well and where they need improvement, school leaders often observe teaching and provide constructive criticism and supportive feedback that helps educators rethink their teaching style and improve their effectiveness. Educational leaders also encourage their teaching staff to participate in seminars, workshops, training sessions, and other professional development initiatives.

Another significant method educational leaders use is fostering collaboration and a culture of shared responsibility among teaching staff. Educational leaders encourage teachers to build communities, mentor one another in peer groups, hold regular team meetings, and plan lessons in groups, sharing their opinions, experiences, and teaching practices. As a result, teachers have more opportunities to learn from each other and find solutions to different classroom issues. In addition, school leaders maintain communication with their teaching staff by being accessible and approachable.

School leaders support teachers' instructional activities by ensuring they have access to instructional materials, technological tools, facilities, and other learning resources. The leaders ensure teachers have the necessary resources. They also provide materials for classroom use. Another role of leaders is to inspire teachers to use learner-centered practices, including the proper use of technology and collaborative work with students. Thus, these activities help meet students' learning needs, abilities, and interests.

In addition, school administrators use methods to recognize and enhance teachers' motivation and well-being. Leaders notice teachers' achievements and ensure they provide support. School leaders also consider teachers' workload and make step-by-step decisions that help overcome difficulties.

Finally, school leaders strengthen teaching and learning by using data and evidence to guide instruction. They review student results, assessment data, classroom observations, and teacher input to identify areas that need support or improvement. School leaders work with teachers to create action plans and monitor their progress. Overall, the strategies and practices described by the participants show a supportive and instructional leadership style in which school leaders act not only as managers but also as mentors, helpers, motivators, and partners with teachers to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes.

SUMMARY

The findings reveal that the head of the school sees developing teaching and learning as a multifaceted and significant job that goes beyond administrative functions. They supervise teachers, offer coaching and mentoring, provide feedback, and facilitate professional development. They must meet learners' needs and adapt to the changing requirements of the education system. They emphasize the importance of collaborating with teachers, parents, learners, and other community members. Effective resource management and creating a favorable school environment are key parts of their job.

School leaders face difficulties in performing their roles. These impediments include limited access to resources, differences in teachers' competence and motivation, reluctance to accept change, varied student needs, heavy administrative workloads, communication barriers, rapid advances in technology and curriculum, low stakeholder engagement, and high accountability. School leaders cope with these difficulties using different techniques. They mobilize resources, delegate responsibilities, provide professional development support, maintain open communication, co-make decisions, use methods, build partnerships, and apply data monitoring.

According to the findings, school leaders use various leadership techniques, such as supportive and instructional ones, to foster teachers' professional development and improve teaching quality in their institutions. The main techniques used for this purpose are classroom observations, feedback on teaching practice, coaching and mentoring teachers, and organizing teacher development opportunities. In addition, principals promote learner-centered teaching methodologies, use innovative approaches and techniques, and provide context-relevant learning opportunities. They acknowledge teachers' accomplishments, consider their workloads, and try to enhance motivation.

School leaders rely on a wide range of data sets to inform their actions and drive improvement. Taken together, these findings suggest that effective school leadership is characterized not only by support, collaboration, and flexibility, but also by creative thinking and trust in teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

- The results have shown that school leaders view their role in the integration of teaching and learning as an ongoing and complex task that is more than mere administration. School leaders' experiences include supervision, teacher support, collaboration, adaptability, resource management, and establishing a positive school climate.

Moreover, effective leadership is reflected in commitment to both teachers and pupils and the ability to consider changing circumstances in education.

- School leaders are faced with obstacles that limit their ability to cooperate, including lack of resources, differences in competence and motivation of their teachers, opposition toward innovations, diverse learner needs, too many responsibilities, communication problems, technological and curricular developments, and lack of support from the stakeholders. Despite these obstacles, school leaders continue to seek creative solutions through cooperation, shared responsibility, professional training, open communication, and stakeholder engagement.
- Finally, school leaders apply both supportive and instructional leadership strategies that facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning. These strategies include classroom observation, coaching and mentoring, training, collaboration, resource provision, technology integration, teacher recognition, and data-driven decision-making. School leaders also act as mentors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The focus of school administrators must be on enhancing administrative skills through regular coaching, guiding, providing feedback, and creating opportunities for teachers to develop professionally. They must also emphasize seeking ways to make better decisions, build relationships with everyone involved, use available facilities effectively, and maintain a positive atmosphere to improve education continuously.
2. A school leader has to create the best ways to deal with difficulties of implementation. This means allocating resources and assigning tasks to the right people, providing teacher training, improving two-way communication, and establishing inclusive education programs. Schools must collaborate with parents and other administrators to build support and secure resources.
3. Finally, school leaders should keep doing these things and make them a regular part of school life. That means ensuring coaching and mentoring programs, groups where teachers learn together, and teamwork for planning lessons and reviewing teaching methods, supported by real evidence. They should also encourage better, student-focused teaching, thank teachers for their work, help teachers stay healthy and happy, and use test results to improve teaching. This helps create a more collaborative, student-focused approach to teaching and learning.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to improve language clarity, grammar, and formatting. The researcher independently conducted the study's conceptualization, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and conclusion development.

REFERENCES

- Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2016). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), 221–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X15616863>
- Dutta, V., Sahney, S. (2016). School leadership and its impact on student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 30(6), 941–958. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-12-2014-0170>
- He, P., Guo, F., & Abazie, G. A. (2024). School principals' instructional leadership as a predictor of teacher's professional development. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 9, 63. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00290-0>

- Liu, Y., Li, L., & Huang, C. (2022). To what extent is shared instructional leadership related to teacher self-efficacy and student academic performance in China? *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 33(3), 381–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2022.2029746>
- Pashmforoosh, R., Irby, B. J., Lara-Alecio, R., & Tong, F. (2023). Building school leaders' instructional leadership capacity through virtual professional leadership learning communities. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, 1168734. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1168734>
- Rodrigues, H. P. C., & Lima, J. Á. de. (2024). Instructional leadership and student achievement: School leaders' perspectives. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 27(2), 360–384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1869312>
- Thien, L. M., & Liu, P. (2024). Linear and nonlinear relationships between instructional leadership and teacher professional learning through teacher self-efficacy as a mediator: A partial least squares analysis. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02500-5>
- Thomas, L., Tuytens, M., Devos, G., Kelchtermans, G., & Vanderlinde, R. (2020). Transformational school leadership as a key factor for teachers' job attitudes during their first year in the profession. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(1), 106–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218781064>